NELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY

Brand Identity Review: 5 Years on

2017–2022



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Brand Identity Review: 5 Years on

An Analysis of the Visual Application of the Nelson Mandela University Brand (2017–2022)

MARCH 2023

INTRODUCTION

In 2017, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) was renamed Nelson Mandela University, after the esteemed statesman who served as South African's first democratically elected president. In adopting the new name, the university signalled its intention to live up to the values of Mandela and become a dynamic African university, recognised for its leadership in generating cutting-edge knowledge for a sustainable future. To this end, a brand identity was developed to visually reflect and articulate the new aspirations and inspire a sense of transformational change-making.

Developed by Cape Town-based brand agency, Creative Caterpillar, the look and feel of the new identity was anchored in a dynamic African aesthetic synthesised in a modern, font-based logo representing a forward-thinking concept. A colour palette consisting of navy blue symbolising heritage, strength, trustworthiness and gravitas, and bright yellow denoting approachability, freshness and warmth, provide visual depth and strong contrast. Use of the circle and triangle in the logo, which signals ingenuity and creativity, was extended into pattern formations used throughout the brand. The University's main thrust was encapsulated in the strapline: "Change the World" – an articulation of a powerful conviction and call to action.

Though appearing simple in its presentation, the new brand was bold and impactful and an expression of a new kind of African university.

REVIEW SCOPE

In implementing the brand, many collateral designs have been produced, forming key touchpoints with stakeholders. The foundational concepts underpinning the new identity have been interpreted and applied on various materials and digital forms. This process has inevitably led to an evolution and extension of the brand's visual presentation. Following five years of implementation, it is necessary to take a pause and review the progress made and to ascertain areas which require improvement.

Given the expanse of collateral produced, any appraisal of the brand's implementation requires a broad brushstroke approach that will give a high-level view of the journey travelled thus far.

Typically, an organisation would conduct a brand audit to analyse visual messaging as well as aspects of brand awareness and experience among stakeholders, positioning against competitors, advertising strategies and more.

This review analyses visual presentation of the Mandela University brand as an area of high impact on how people experience and recall the brand. The extensive production of visual communications throughout the university also makes such a review a priority, as it has become evident that there is some dilution of the brand taking place. This is largely due to the decentralised nature of the production of visual communications at the University. It is therefore important to devise new strategies to stem any decline in brand standards while strengthening gains already made. This report aims to illuminate successes, challenges and areas for improvement; to inform a renewed approach that will mitigate risks and facilitate growth of the brand.

METHODOLOGY

As noted, a high-level analysis was the most effective means to the carry out this review. The approach was to extract recurring themes and make broad observations which can assist in charting a way forward.

The review relied on designs of various forms extracted from across the University, including email memo designs, social media posts, web and email banners, booklets and publications, posters, apparel and more. Interviews with the branding team in the Communication and Marketing Department provided important insights on how the brand has been implemented and provided observations on the challenges which have emerged. As the chief custodians of the brand identity, this team's input also provided vital insights into application and production processes. Interviews were also conducted with key staff of Alumni Relations, Madibaz Sport and the University Shop whose departments play a central role in brand implementation.

This report is structured to present an analysis of the application of the seven visual components of the brand identity which are as follows:

- Logo
- Colour
- Fonts
- Composition
- Icons and patterns
- Illustrations
- Imagery and photography

Also provided is an analysis of some significant projects and brand interaction touchpoints and commentary on possible solutions to the challenges described and mechanisms to reinforce and sustain successes.

Analysis of Visual Application



Change the World

Logo Application

Consistent application of a logo without any alternations or distortions is an important component for successful branding. Key to this is correct logo placement against the right colour background with an adequate amount of breathing space surrounding it.

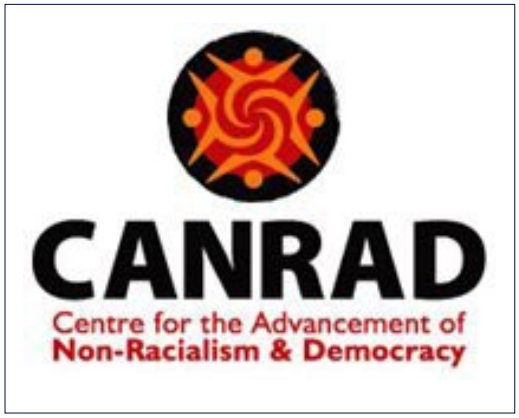
Use of the new University logo has generally been embraced across the institution as it is regularly applied to various designs. This is a positive development as it indicates that the new name has been largely embraced by the University community.

Placement of the logo has however not always followed the correct standards which require a minimum zone of breathing space to surround it and placement against a white or university blue background only. It has also been observed that while the stacked orientation of the logo is the preferred option the linear orientation is regularly used in various contexts.

The brand identity guidelines detail how the University logo should be paired with a Faculty, School or Society name to create a sub-brand logo which foregrounds the University name while clearly identifying the specific entity. This application has been used in some designs however what are referred to as name logos have been developed. These often consist of the entity's name and acronym where relevant, may use a combination of yellow, blue and white, and can be placed near the University logo or at the bottom of designs. They may only contain letters and cannot include any graphics, icons or symbols. Although several name logos have been designed criteria for their application is yet to be written into the brand guidelines.

Counter to the standards described above, some entities have developed their own logos, thereby posing a risk of brand dilution. These logos often appear in email signatures where they will undoubtedly be widely seen. Student societies and residences also regularly express a desire to create their own logos and sub-branding, for use on apparel and other items, to uniquely identify them and represent or symbolise their activities.

Some entities have retained old logos and sub-branding while others have created new unsanctioned logos.







The Communication and Marketing Department has made good strides in disposing of independent logos which had emerged prior to the rebranding exercise and few remnants persist. However, to deal with some of the old sub-brands and logos, it is necessary for the University to clarify how certain entities fit into the university structure. A case in point is eNtsa which has traditionally used a brand that is distinct from the University and continues to do so. In general, it is advisable for all entities to fall clearly within the University's sub-brand structure as they form part of or are embedded within the institution. If certain entities are to have a brand divorced from the parent brand, there should be clear and reasoned benefits to the University with standardised guidelines set to govern such anomalies.

To stem the emergence or entrenchment of sub-brands and logos that dilute and/or undermine the Nelson Mandela University brand, there is a need to address the issues around sub-branding as a matter of priority in a careful and considered manner.

Sub-brand logo setup as detailed in the brand manual



Name Logo examples





eNtsa continues to use a distinct logo and brand identity



Examples of logo misapplication









The desire to create new distinct logos can likely be attributed to a lack of understanding of how brands work and the assumption that a logo is a brand. It is also the pursuit for singularity or distinctiveness which often drives such uniformed choices. Efforts need to be made to educate and advocate internally for a better understanding of the benefits of applying the University brand consistently across faculties, departments and other entities. Standards for application of the logo and the correct orientation to be used, in particular contexts, should also be emphasised among designers and others responsible for the production of designs across the University. A brand policy which is under development will also assist in ensuring compliance with the correct use of the logo.

Regarding the student sphere, thought should be given to how student societies can creatively represent themselves in a way that might steer the conversation away from a focus on logos. This will be most effectively done by formulating brand guidelines for the student arena more broadly, in a way that encourages creativity while remaining faithful the University brand.

Examples of logo misapplication









Colour Application

Nelson Mandela University brand colours consist of a navy blue and a bright golden yellow, with a web only palette made up of variations of these colours for optimal screen viewing. The brand also includes distinct colours to represent each of the seven faculties and a turquoise colour to represent the Ocean Sciences Campus.

According to the original brand guidelines, blue is the primary or main University colour, while yellow is a secondary supporting colour. As the identity has been implemented, primacy of the blue over the yellow has largely been downplayed to allow for more bright and light designs where appropriate, through prominent use of the yellow. In practice therefore, the blue and yellow in varying measure make up the university's brand palette.

The visual impact of the blue and yellow is striking and many designs have exhibited this effect.

Effective use of brand colours







Faculty colour application







Application of the faculty colours has however proved challenging, confusing and inconsistent. At the inception of the brand, the faculty colours were adopted and incorporated wholesale from the old NMMU brand. Understandably faculties had become attached to them and want to continue their use.

Guidelines were however not developed to specify when these colours could be used and how they should be applied in conjunction with the University colours. This has resulted in varying application leading to some dilution of the brand. In some instances, faculty colours have been paired with only one of the university colours or applied with both simultaneously. While some faculty colours pair well with the blue and yellow, others such as the Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences' lavender and the Faculty of Sciences' green tend to clash.

The sense of pride in belonging to a particular faculty appears to resonate strongly among students as demonstrated by requests submitted to the University Shop for unique faculty branded clothing. The Shop, which is responsible for production of all branded apparel, has noted a high volume of requests for mostly faculty colour branded t-shirts. However, because there are no standards informing to what extent these colours can be applied and how, application has been inconsistent.

Given that use of colour is one of the most impactful ways for people to recognise a brand, the guidelines governing the use of the University colours in conjunction with faculty and other supporting colours need to be clarified. In formulating a way forward, consideration should be given as to whether these colours benefit the University brand in any way, in which contexts, and how they may be used in a way that enhances rather than dilutes the brand.

Use of the Ocean Sciences Campus turquoise which has been successfully applied on the campuses spatial branding needs to be more carefully codified. Should this colour be applied to all designs and collateral relating to the Ocean Sciences Campus and should it only be paired with the university blue and not the yellow?

Ocean Sciences Campus branding using University blue and Ocean Sciences turquoise



Branded campus residences



Colour application in architectural designs has also emerged as an issue with the new Medical School building being a notable case. In this building, the architects applied the Faculty of Health Sciences' light moss green colour throughout the interior spaces, thus limiting the potential for creating visual harmony with the University's main brand colours. In contrast, the new University residences under construction on North Campus and others recently erected on the George Campus have been strikingly coloured in the university blue and yellow. The latter example demonstrates how the architectural landscape can be effectively used to showcase the brand.

To maximise the potential of spatial branding and avoid complications which will counteract attempts at branding after construction, architects should be briefed to incorporate branding considerations in their design impressions. Consideration should be given to making this a standard clause in all architect appointment contracts.

Though effective, the University blue and yellow also pose some limitations particularly in a context where large volumes of visual communications are produced. Variation is needed to trigger and retain stakeholder attention while remaining faithful to the core of the brand. There has been an increasing use of tints (i.e. a percentage saturation) of the blue and yellow which has helped to provide such variation, however some suggestions have been made to consider adding other supporting colours.

Infographic-heavy designs in which variation in colour would provide for better communication or layouts in the alumni and friends magazine, *Thetha*, would arguably benefit from supporting colour options. Regarding *Thetha* in particular, colours such as the Ocean Sciences turquoise and faculty colours have been used to help create the feel of a magazine, rather than a corporate publication. Given that these colours were intended to represent specific entities only, this is not an ideal

Water saving designs with application of non-brand colour









approach. Thought should therefore be given to whether certain publications should have their own specified palette which is rooted in the main brand.

There has also been some use of supporting colours which have not been built into the brand. For instance, the water saving campaign designs of 2021/22 have made use of a light blue colour in conjunction with the two University colours. Similarly, in the 2022 postgraduate recruitment campaign, a variety of non-brand colours were incorporated into designs. The thinking at the time was to distinguish between local and international streams of recruitment through use of colour. The resultant designs incorporated a wide mix of off-brand colours which arguably had the effect of brand dilution. In hindsight, use of different styles of composition or imagery could have been considered to create the distinction sought, while remaining true to the brand.

Overall, addition of colours to the brand palette should be carefully considered and the far-reaching implications taken into account, before a final decision is made. Any additions should ultimately make the brand more effective, visually enhance it and maximise impact rather than lead to dilution and confusion. The concept of less is more should also not be underestimated as many brands have successfully positioned themselves with a single impactful colour. The University of Johannesburg's orange for instance, comes to mind.

In general, colour application in designs produced by entities at the University is an area requiring attention. While work produced through or with the input and support of the Communication and Marketing Department has generally followed correct application of brand colours, efforts should be made to ensure consistent application more broadly. This applies particularly on email memos, social media designs and other digital assets. Means should be devised to get the various individuals responsible for designing visual communications across the University to better understand and implement the brand standards. The need for increased brand education is a recurring theme emerging from this review and should form a key part of the Communication and Marketing Department's plans going forward.

International postgraduate recruitment designs incorporating non-brand colours







Thetha spread with Ocean Sciences turquoise used in an article unrelated to Ocean Sciences



Font Application

When the brand was developed, Avenir, a clean geometric sans serif font family was selected as the official university typeface and Arial was set as an alternative for those without access to Avenir. Since then, Beauty, a script display typeface has been used on occasion to create contrast and a sense of movement in large headings. The extent of its usage has however remained minimal.

Application of the official font across the institution has been inconsistent as starkly evident in many memo emails, social media posts and poster designs. Making the font accessible to all staff and students to download on the respective portals would likely result in better adoption. However, attention must be paid to the possible licensing costs and implications. The additional Beauty typeface also needs to be written into the brand guidelines and made available to key designers across the institution.

Avenir font

Avenir – Black
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890!@#$%^&*()_+

Avenir – Medium
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890!@#$%^&*()_+

Avenir – Book
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890!@#$%^&*()_+

Avenir – Light
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890!@#$%^&()_+*

"Lungile" written in Beauty font



Examples of incorrect font application











Composition and Design Quality

High quality designs require a careful balance of compositional elements to create a harmonious and visually pleasing layout. Designs produced by professional designers tend to meet these standards but not all entities make use of professional services for their design requirements.

In the early stages of development of the brand, an effort was made to create templates which could be downloaded to produce basic collateral. For instance, PowerPoint presentations were downloadable on the staff portal and have been used with some success. However, production of more complex designs such as faculty brochures, posters, social media posts and booklets are more challenging to produce for those without professional design training or experience. To mitigate this challenge, an effort has been made to provide as much design support as possible through the Communication and Marketing Department. A cohort of designers have been contracted to assist in this work. However, the sheer volume of design work required across the University outweighs the available capacity, so this service is limited.

Where the use of templates is not practical, several measures can be put in place to help standardise and improve the quality of design across the institution. One such approach could be to formulate a database of designers who have been acquainted with the brand and attended training sessions on designing to the requisite brand standards. When requiring professional design services, departments would be able to select a service provider with confidence that they will work from the correct standards.

Examples of brand misapplication in layout





Examples of brand misapplication in layout







Those commissioning design work also need to understand the brand, the importance of following set guidelines and how to brief their designers for best results. Workshops with departmental administrators, interns and other individuals often tasked with producing communications material can be organised at certain intervals each year to train and inform them on university branding. It will also be important to advocate for standardised application of the brand amongst departmental heads, who often have the power of final sign-off on design projects.

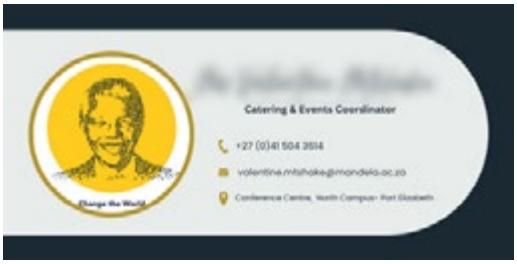
Incorrect branding in emails has also emerged as a significant challenge and given that this is the primary means of communication at the University, the issue requires close attention. Although some individuals have made use of the email signature template provided by the University, which specifies the layout and information which may appear, many continue to use personalised signatures and email banners which do not align with brand standards. Furthermore, the University has introduced email banners for various campaigns but the standards for such application are yet to be clearly articulated in the brand guidelines.

There is a need to find ways to address this issue as the more incorrect representations of the brand circulate, the greater the effects of brand dilution and increased non-compliance.

Correct email signature format per brand guidelines



Examples of brand misapplication in email signatures









Example application of water campaign banner in email signature. The application of campaign banners is yet to be standardised in the brand guidelines



Icons, Symbols and Patterns

As an African brand, Mandela University draws inspiration from patterns which are prevalent in craft and design across the continent. Many of the patterns applied to the brand mimic the forms found in bead designs produced in the Eastern Cape and other parts of South Africa. The Madibaz sportswear is an excellent example of how the circle and triangle patterns have been applied to great visual effect.

Patterns have also been used on the University website, publications, posters banners and other collateral to create visual interest and texture. These patterns allow for broad creative expression which aids in keeping the brand fresh and lively. It is however necessary to formulate some guidelines on the application of patterns so that they do not appear to be symbols or icons, which do not form a part of the brand.

Taking a consultative process approach, the University is working towards the creation of signs and symbols that can represent the values, culture and heritage the institution desires to cultivate. While this process is underway, the creation of icons, signs and symbols to represent certain aspects of the University have been discouraged. However, some have begun to emerge. High-level engagements will be required to dissuade the pre-emptive development and use of such representations.

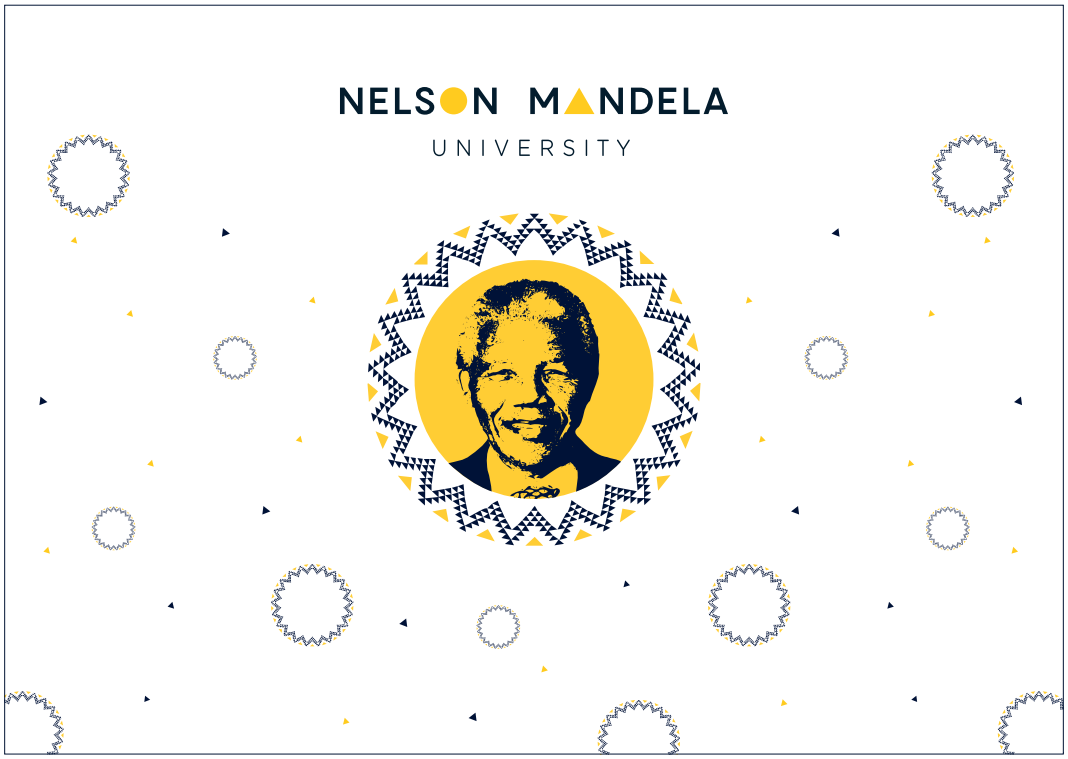
At the same time, clarification is needed on how signs and symbols once developed will interact with the University's brand identity. It is foreseeable that unless carefully positioned within the brand architecture, the risk of dilution will emerge. It is crucial that an unambiguous set of guidelines on how signs and symbols should be used needs to be developed. This will ensure that they do not supplant or subordinate the University logo. Such guidelines should at the least define what kind of entities may have such representations, when and how these may be used and how they sit within the brand architecture.

Example of symbols which have emerged



Use of pattern in graduation items





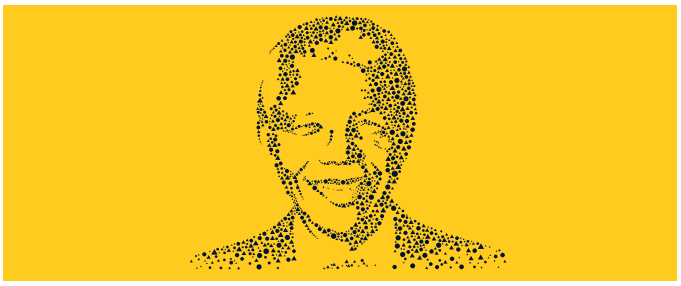
Illustrations

The use of illustrations in design is a useful means to communicate pictorially. Through illustration, complicated concepts and ideas can be distilled for easier understanding, while communication can be made more personal, engaging and informal. The most iconic illustration used in the university's brand is the Mandela face made up of small circles and triangles to create a stippling-like effect. Other illustrations of Nelson Mandela derived from iconic photographs of the statesman have also been applied to various designs.

To ensure consistency, a benefit can be derived from setting standards on illustrative depictions of Mandela. A set of standards could also be developed to guide how illustrations in general should look. So far, a variety of styles have been used including sketch, line and flat illustration. Consideration should be given to developing a recognisable Nelson Mandela University illustration style.

A variety of illustration styles are used as part of the brand









Imagery and Photography

Photography plays an important role in communicating and is an effective way to represent the lived experience of people at the University. Photographs showing real students and staff studying and working at the University can give a better sense of the Mandela University environment than the use of stock images. For this reason, the brand favours the use of photographs of people in action at the institution – learning, teaching, researching and interacting.

Obtaining good photographs has however not always been easy and with limited budgets it is not possible to always commission a photographer to get the shots needed. In addition, it is often not possible to have a photographer accompany students, researchers and academics in the field to get images of them at work. To get high quality images which can be used in publications and with website articles, consideration should be given to providing training sessions to students and staff on how to take good photos when conducting their research. This is a cost-effective way to ensure access to project or field specific photographs for communication materials and is an achievable approach. Most phones today have high-definition cameras which can take quality pictures. Training of staff and students could focus on aspects of adjusting settings to ensure the device captures images at a high resolution and how best to compose and frame the photos.

Student photographers have proven to capture some of the most outstanding images that have been used in the University's marketing material. Photos used in the student diaries, undergraduate guides and annual reports have predominately been taken by students. Ways to get more students to contribute student life photos to the repository of images available to the institution should be devised and implemented.

A photo bank from which campus life images can be downloaded could also be established to make campus-life photos more widely available. At present the Communication and Marketing Department has a departmental-shared database of photos, but consideration should be given to how this can be expanded across the institution.

Photography by students






Analysis of Significant Projects and Brand Touchpoints



Change the World

Campus Events and Launches

Campus events including launches of new programmes and infrastructure play an important role in positioning the Mandela University brand. Local and national media regularly cover these events which often mark achievements of national significance such as the launch in 2017 of South African's first dedicated Ocean Science Campus.

Functions organised through the Communication and Marketing Department are demonstrative of what is possible with event branding and some notable examples are discussed below.

Examples of branding at university events



Branding at graduation events







Graduation

Graduation ceremonies and supporting activities are important moments of celebration for students with their families. As a significant milestone in a student's academic journey, graduation can evoke strong and emotional memories of one's time at the University and thus forms a key brand touchpoint that can bolster a long-lasting connection with the institution.

The Communication and Marketing Department has successfully branded graduation ceremonies and events with professionally designed banners, invitations, tickets, dinner menus, table settings and programme booklets. Coupled with the new branded ceremonial garb of the University leadership and colourful stage drapings, these events have been executed as successful immersive brand experiences.

FishFORCE branded infographics







Ocean Sciences Campus

In September 2017, the Ocean Sciences Campus at Nelson Mandela University, the first of its kind in South Africa, was launched. Positioned as a hub for creative, pioneering transdisciplinary, postgraduate ocean sciences research, teaching, innovation and engagement, the campus offered a unique branding opportunity.

Spatial branding of the campus focused on large format prints of marine and coastal images and created an immersive architectural and branding experience through use of the University blue and Ocean Sciences turquoise colours to give one the sense of entering into the depths of the ocean. As the first major branding project conducted following the University's renaming, this it is an important case study on how buildings at the University can be branded in a way that visually communicates their purpose.

While launch events are an opportunity to initiate the branding process for participating entities, further support after the event may be required to ensure that correct brand application is kept up. After the Ocean Sciences Campus launch, some publications and collateral produced for the campus did not meet the brand identity standards. To ensure sustained momentum, processes to guide and support entities after launch events should be developed. Work done to advise and support branding of the Institute of Coastal and Marine Research and support provided to FishFORCE after the Ocean Sciences launch should be replicated and extended to other entities as much as possible.

Undergraduate Recruitment Campaigns

Campaigns to attract prospective students are run on an annual basis. Over the years, advertising agencies Boomtown and Stratitude have developed the design concepts for these campaigns. More recently Ampersand Studio has been appointed to assist with the retention phase of the 2022/23 recruitment cycle.

Campaigns produced have relied heavily on illustrations and the bold use of the yellow to create attractive informal designs which appeal to the youth market. A January 2022 marketing report indicated that the recruitment campaign for 2022 registrations generated significant exposure for the website and Mandela brand, with over 2.8 million impressions and 34 000 clicks to site.

Success of these campaigns can be attributed to the broader digital first strategic approach to student recruitment, in which the quality of design plays an integral part. Emergence of positive outcomes in this area suggests these campaigns are resonating with the market.

Undergraduate recruitment campaign designs









Publications

Significant institution-wide publications have been produced to communicate various activities at the University including research, learning and teaching, and engagement and to commemorate significant milestones. High-level publications have included among others integrated annual reports, research and innovation reports, faculty feature publications and a variety of showcase publications marking launches of infrastructure and academic programmes. These publications are aimed at different stakeholders including students, staff, existing and prospective students, partners, funders and government.

Produced by the Communication and Marketing Department, the publications go through a process of quality control with designs checked early in production to ensure consistent brand application. Each publication or publication series takes a different design based on the content and target audience. As more publications have been produced, better mechanisms for quality control and decisions regarding standardisation have been developed and implemented.

University departments, faculties and institutes have been encouraged to approach the Communication and Marketing Department when considering the production of publications to obtain guidance on brand application. This has not always occurred, leading to the production of some publications which do not meet brand standards.

As previously noted, this is a recurring challenge in the design of collateral in general. It will need to be addressed through a comprehensive approach that ensures knowledge and understanding of the brand standards among those commissioning the work and those executing it. Processes for the approval of significant University branding projects should also be developed and communicated widely. To support this work, the printing and procurement departments should be co-opted to assist in ensuring branded items are approved by the branding team in Communication and Marketing prior to procurement or printing.

Examples of University publications









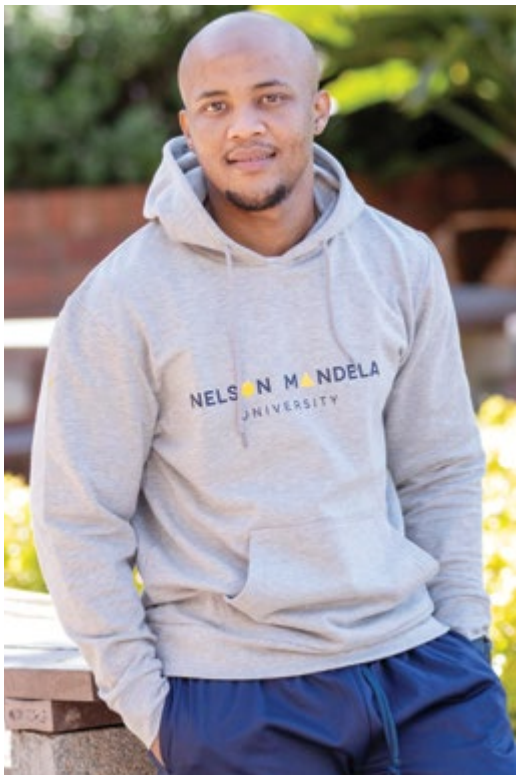
University Shop

When the University was renamed in 2017, the University Shop was positioned as a key driver of the new brand. Newly designed apparel in the University colours and emblazoned with the new logo was produced and sold by the outlet, creating a sense of excitement around the new brand.

Today, the shop faces numerous branding-related challenges which urgently require a comprehensive solution, as it has become evident that the case-by-case approach used to deal with these matters so far, is inadequate. Addressing these concerns as quickly and holistically as possible is especially crucial as the shop is scheduled for relaunch at a new physical location in 2023.

Producing and selling branded apparel, staff and student uniforms, gifts and other promotional items, the shop is a self-sustaining trading entity, that has both a brand advancement and commercial mandate. To successfully achieve its dual function, it must balance consistent application of the brand identity with a responsiveness to fashion and market trends and consumer preferences. Brand standards relating to the shop therefore need to meet with market realities in a way that will ensure success. The tension between currently-set brand guidelines and these market realities is a central challenge which is discussed below, along with other pressing matters relating to production of branded items.

Examples of shop merchandise





Examples of shop merchandise





At the Shop's launch, requests quickly flooded in for newly branded clothing and gifts from departments across the University. Departments – which make up the bulk of sales through orders of clothing and gifts – surpass student purchases which lean towards leisurewear, mostly in the form of hoodies, sweaters and joggers.

On its first day of trading, the Shop's sales reached more than R50,000 with hoodies, body warmers and white t-shirts, branded with the University logo emerging as top sellers. In the five-year period since, hoodies have remained a strong seller with tracksuits, shorts, sweaters and baseball jackets also sought after. To attract new and returning customers, new ranges and designs now need to be introduced.

In line with the University palette, most clothing items in the Shop come in navy blue but customer feedback indicates that this colour is unappealing. Customers wish to see more variety with lighter, trendy, eye-catching designs as seen in the general clothing market. The shop's sales also indicate that customers do not favour items branded with the University logo, opting instead for designs with large "Mandela" or "Madibaz" inscriptions. Madibaz branded leisurewear, in particular attracts many buyers. However, these designs have been flagged as off-brand. A similar conclusion was drawn regarding clothing inscribed with a college block lettering style popular in the US, yet such items are in high in demand.

This has necessitated a review of brand guidelines governing apparel, in order to balance commercial imperatives with brand consistency. The review is being undertaken by the Communications and Marketing Department in conjunction with the Shop. While this process is underway, serious consideration should be given to conducting a market research analysis and survey which can inform the new product development and brand guidelines.

Further to the creation of new guidelines, concerns have been raised that without the counsel of a brand agency that is responsible for overall implementation of the brand, there will still be uncertainty

Letterman jacket and hoodie with college font





on what designs to allow. It is worth noting that the lack of a single agency to conceptualise and oversee the entire brand has emerged as a general challenge to branding at the University. The appointment of agencies on a project basis has arguably cultivated some inconsistencies, with each agency keen to make its own creative mark on the brand. As a result, projects can lack visual harmony and misalign with the original vision developed by Creative Caterpillar in 2017.

Another major challenge for the shop relates to the limitations posed by available materials and production processes. When applying brand standards, it is normal to face unexpected challenges due to practical realities that might limit the possibility of bringing to life what is initially envisaged. Adaptability and creative problem solving are required to overcome these challenges while remaining true to the original vision. This has been the case in applying the Mandela brand to uniforms required by some staff and students.

Ground staff spend most of their day in the open, exposed to the weather elements, far more for example than cleaning or catering staff who operate indoors. Under these conditions, their uniforms age prematurely and particularly if dyed in the University's navy blue. With the cost of regularly replacing uniforms clearly prohibitive, the navy overalls have been replaced by light blue alternatives.

In addition to durability some uniforms must meet certain professional standards. The scrubs worn by Health Sciences students are a case in point. This attire cannot be found in the University's brand colours. Therefore, alternative colours had to be sourced.

Although such outcomes are less than ideal, where brand standards cannot be met to the desirable level, the key is to ensure consistency in application. The substitutes which have been taken over the years should be reviewed to see if they remain the next best equivalent and assessed for their long-term applicability. They should subsequently be firmed up and brand guidelines updated to standardise their application, clearly stipulating the circumstances under which they may be adopted.

Other procurement considerations relate to consistency of fabric quality and colour tone. These may differ depending on the supplier used or the time at which the material is procured. The shop has made efforts to purchase fabrics from reputable suppliers whom they have found to provide the best quality and consistency within set budgets. Outcomes are however not guaranteed, and so ongoing supply chain monitoring and evaluation is necessary.

Overall, while the production of branded apparel and promotional materials is one of the areas with the greatest potential for brand impact, this can only be leveraged by setting standards that are sensitive to the needs and desires of the target market, as well as finding replicable alternatives where ideal standards cannot be met, and consistently monitoring procurement and production.

It is vital that the issues raised above be addressed urgently because the shop has enormous potential not only to popularise the Mandela University brand but to make a significant contribution to the long-term financial sustainability of the University.

Madibaz Sport

Madibaz Sport is an essential brand touchpoint under which University students, staff and alumni, whether participating, coaching or watching, can rally, be inspired and feel a sense of pride. Locally, Madibaz Sport is featured in the media almost daily and participation of teams in televised matches such as the Varsity Cup helps to amplify the brand on a national stage. Given the unique capacity for sport to unite and evoke strong emotional connections, its contribution to the University's brand equity cannot be overstated.

Over the last five years, much work has been done by the Madibaz Department in close collaboration with Communication and Marketing to ensure that Madibaz Sport remains a high-level driver of the new brand through consistent and refined presentation of its visual identity. Madibaz indeed stands out as one of the most well branded entities in the institution, from team kits, advertising and signage to the spatial branding of sports fields, indoor centres and offices.

Branding on Madibaz Sport kit



Madibaz Sport spatial branding







While the success in its application is no doubt a point to celebrate, it is important to consider how this sub-brand interacts with the parent brand. The university's posture towards sub-branding has been a branded house model in which sub-brands operate under the main brand's umbrella. In practice, this has meant that the sub-brand uses the same visual elements as the parent brand and name logos always appear with the University logo.

Although Madibaz Sport was intended to operate within this framework and has successfully been applied as such in its presentation of University colours and fonts, this sub-brand has taken on a life of its own which may be viewed in some ways as bifurcating from the centre. How the success of this very important, largely student-driven part of the brand architecture can be leveraged to the benefit of the main Mandela University brand proposition needs to be investigated. Ensuring that the parent brand can stand out more in sports branding and how it can be used to popularise elements of the parent brand will be important.

Madibaz Sport also operates in a unique context where co-branding with corporate sponsors plays an important role. It has attracted almost R300 000 in corporate sponsorship in the last three years with Spar and Coca-Cola being some of the leading big-name sponsors. With sponsorship playing such an important role in the promotion of University sport, it is imperative for Mandela University to have clear guidelines governing co-branding so that it can derive maximum benefit from such relationships.

Furthermore, as a brand extension which is regularly televised, it is important to consider how components of the Madibaz sub-brand present through this medium. One identified challenge relates to placement of the University logo with the Madibaz name logo on the screen chyron (the graphic appearing at the bottom of the screen showing match scores). Due to the text-based nature of both the University logo and the Madibaz name logo, the large volume of space required to include both, and the fact that the university does not have a shield or icon which could serve as a kind of shorthand for the institutional logo, the Madibaz name logo is applied on its own in the chyron. This means that the Madibaz sub-brand stands alone in widely viewed matches. Consideration should be given to how this can be overcome to ensure that the branded house model prevails and the Madibaz Sport sub-brand can be leveraged to the benefit of the parent brand in this context.

Signage

Entering any one of Nelson Mandela University's seven campuses should be an immersive brand experience. Campus signage is often the first interaction people will have with the brand and thus forms an important part of the institution's visual identity.

Financial limitations constrained the installation of new campus signage when the new brand was launched in 2017. To save on costs, vinyl stickers with the new University logo were used to cover the old NMMU branding on external way-finding signage. The vinyl coverings were taken as a temporary measure until resources became available to phase in new fully branded signage.

It is evident that by and large, campus signage requires an overhaul as many signs are visibly damaged or worn. This gives a negative impression of Mandela University and thus requires urgent attention. If a phased approach is taken, replacement of the most badly damaged signs should be prioritised.

There are four types of building signage visible across the University's campuses. These include chromadek (the most commonly used across all campuses), brushed aluminium (made up of wrapped vinyl cut lettering in silver, blue or yellow), hanging letters (only applied to the law building) and light box (only applied to the Ocean Sciences Campus).

The material choices for building signs installed over the last five years have been influenced by the following:

- Practical considerations – how can the sign be installed, and will it hold and meet safety requirements?
- Financial considerations – what is the most cost-effective form which can match the available budget?
- Architectural compatibility – will the sign look good on the building?

Campus way-finding signage with University logo vinyl stickers





The lack of uniformity in campus signage is a matter of concern. Although some guidelines were set at the inception of the brand, these standards need to be reviewed and expanded now that there is a clearer view of the practical, financial and architectural implications which may not have been apparent five years ago. This will ensure that even if the rollout of new signage is carried out in separate phases, the same standards are applied throughout the entire process. Unambiguous processes for the approval of signage before production and installation should also form a part of these guidelines.

A sample of the variety of signage styles found across campuses



Naming

Although this review was expressly focused on the visual aspects of the brand, naming practices among stakeholders merit a mention.

When the University was renamed, it was decided that an acronym would not be adopted in the way Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University had been known as NMMU. Instead, proudly using Nelson Mandela University or shortening to Mandela University was an important way to honour and respect the renowned statesman, and closely associate the university with this iconic name, particularly as the only institution of higher learning with the privilege to carry it. In 2017, SRC head of policy, Pedro Mzileni, succinctly articulated this in an opinion piece published in *The Herald* on 11 July 2017 titled: "Student engagement contributes to varsity name change". In it he wrote:

> *"The name change catapults Nelson Mandela University – Mandela for short – into the select few universities like Stanford, Oxford, Cambridge and Harvard that neither use acronyms nor abbreviate their names. Hopefully, in a few short years to come, when our alumni are asked, 'Where did you study?', they can respond proudly, 'I studied at Mandela'."*

Today however, the institution is commonly referred to by people in and outside the university as NMU. That the correct name has not become commonplace needs to be acknowledged and the possible reasons understood.

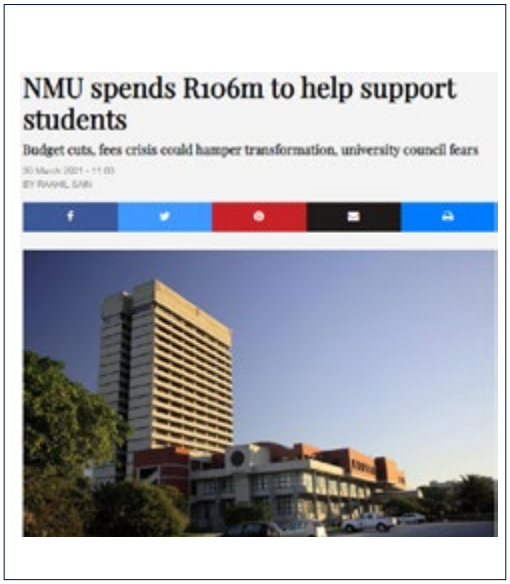
Although a survey would provide a more accurate picture, it is reasonable to deduce that the NMMU acronym had become so entrenched in the general lexicon through more than a decade of use, that an abbreviation of the university's name continues to be favoured by many. This is despite efforts to use the correct identification at higher levels of the institution and in official communication.

The University is working on a communications campaign to encourage correct usage of the name. Success of this plan will depend on a creative, multi-level approach that targets both internal and external stakeholders.

Media, particularly the *Herald,* which is a central point of connection between the University and the broader Nelson Mandela Bay Metro community, needs to be re-engaged on abandoning the acronym. Although space saving in copy has been posited as the reason for defaulting to an abbreviation, it can be argued that there are many brands which are not treated in the same way. For example, Stellenbosch University, Oxford University, Harvard University, and businesses such as Tiger Brands, Tongaat Hulett and Food Lover's Market are named as such in the media, regardless of the length of their names.

The challenge is for Mandela University to find a way to encourage adoption of the new name in a compelling manner that will bring stakeholders willingly on board.

Use of NMU acronym in the media



NMU spends R106m to help support students

Budget cuts, fees crisis could hamper transformation, university council fears



NEWS

Political studies doctorate for NMU lecturer

Ongama Mtimka's thesis looks at use of violence by business forums in Bay construction industry as illustration of inequality and unemployment in SA

BY NTSIKELELO QOYO



NMU business school wants to increase its influence

NMU's maritime-related degrees focus on ports and shipping management



NMU campuses closed due to protests

The university advised staff and students on campus to leave via a gate at the back of the south campus to avoid the protests

Riaan Marais

FOLLOW

Another matter regarding naming relates to the usage of the term Madibaz, a derivation of Nelson Mandela's clan name. Originally coined as a term for athletes at the University, it is increasingly used by students as a nomenclature for one studying at Nelson Mandela University. While its usage is growing, the University should consider what branding implications and opportunities this presents and how it can be leveraged to grow and enhance the Mandela University brand. Other universities have successfully adopted such an approach with Stellenbosch students known as Maties, while University of Pretoria students are named Tukkies. More common use of the term in specific contexts may also assist in countering the NMU acronym, for example "NMU students" could be replaced with "Madibaz".

At present, a variety of student entities use an adaptation of the Madibaz sub-brand as shown below. Guidelines should be set to regulate how the Madibaz name logo should be applied and specify which entities or bodies may make use of it.

Madibaz name logos









Conclusion and Recommendations



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CONCLUSION

Rebranding should be thought of as a process rather than an event, the success of which is dependent on continuous application, monitoring and evaluation. For an institution as large and complex as Nelson Mandela University, where implementation of the brand identity is diffused across the institution, advocacy among internal stakeholders plays a more important role than in organisations where this process is centralised.

A review of the implementation of the Mandela University brand over the last five years reveals that significant strides have been made to ensure adoption and correct application. The new identity has been embraced by many stakeholders and several projects and campaigns have been rolled out, profiling and amplifying the brand.

There do however remain many areas requiring refinement and correction. The brand review has attempted to illuminate where application of the brand has been successful, missteps from which lessons can be drawn and challenges which should be overcome. This report should assist in decision-making and act as a foundation through which to improve implementation of the brand identity. Further investigations and assessments should be carried out, such as how the brand translates in learning and teaching materials. This will supplement the findings of this review and enable the enhancement of brand guidelines and implementation processes to ensure that the Nelson Mandela University brand continues to grow and ultimately thrives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Emerging from the findings of the review, the following recommendations are made:

1. The brand identity guidelines need to be updated to incorporate additions and changes which have been made since the initial brand identity development. These updated standards should be made easily accessible to staff and students.

2. The Communication and Marketing Department should consider conducting brand training sessions at regular intervals for staff and students who produce visual communications at the University, to educate and inform them about the brand identity and its correct application. This training should particularly be targeted at interns and administrators who regularly commission designs for their departments.

3. Consideration should be given to creating a database of designers who have attended training sessions on how to apply the brand correctly and departments should be encouraged to use them, as opposed to outsourcing elsewhere.

4. The Communication and Marketing Department should devise ways to provide branding guidance and support following significant launches and events to cement the gains made.

5. The brand policy development process should be concluded, and the policy adopted as soon as possible to ensure better adoption of the brand standards.

6. As far as possible, templates for basic designs should continue to be made available to the University community.

7. Relationships for close cooperation between the Communication and Marketing Department and key departments such as Procurement and Printing must be cultivated to aid in ensuring brand compliance prior to the procurement or production of branded items.

8. Standards should be set as to what type of projects must be approved by the branding office in the Communication and Marketing Department before implementation or production.

9. Comprehensive guidelines governing branding in the student environment should be developed and adopted.

10. As part of the process of reviewing the University Shop's brand guidelines, a market research analysis and survey should be undertaken to ensure responsiveness to market needs.

11. The campaign to popularise the use of the University's full name should be expedited to stem the continued use of the NMU acronym.

12. Ways to leverage the Madibaz brand to the benefit of the parent brand should be investigated.

13. A plan for the replacement of damaged and worn campus signage should be developed and implemented and signage guidelines updated to reflect designs and materials to be used.

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